



Response to Major Concerns Surrounding Legislation

Why Do We Have 3 Bills?

- To meet its mandate to create a plan for a statewide early learning system (Act 178), EOEL drew upon past work, current state and national expertise, and input from the local early childhood community to develop a proposal for a high-quality early learning program. The program would contract with public schools as well as private preschools and other programs to provide early education services.
- To include the state's existing network of private preschools, which:
 - Make up the backbone of the state's preschool services (expertise and available capacity); and
 - Have a clear educational purpose (explicit educational goals and standards will result in the higher-quality services that will help us achieve the outcomes we need to make a difference for our keiki and our state)
- The Attorney General has advised that a Constitutional amendment is required to address the State's prohibition on private preschools receiving public funds.
- EOEL introduced a bill (HB853 / SB1084) to propose a ConAm to allow public funds to be appropriated "for the support or benefit of private early childhood education programs as provided by law." The amendment is narrowly crafted to be specific to early childhood education programs, maintain the prohibition on vouchers for K-12 education, and allow the Legislature to retain control.
- The ConAm bill is one of three specific to the development of a high-quality early learning system for Hawaii. Once EOEL realized the Constitutional roadblock to implementing its original plan, it added phases to the plan:

PHASE 1 - The School Readiness Program (HB862 / SB1093):

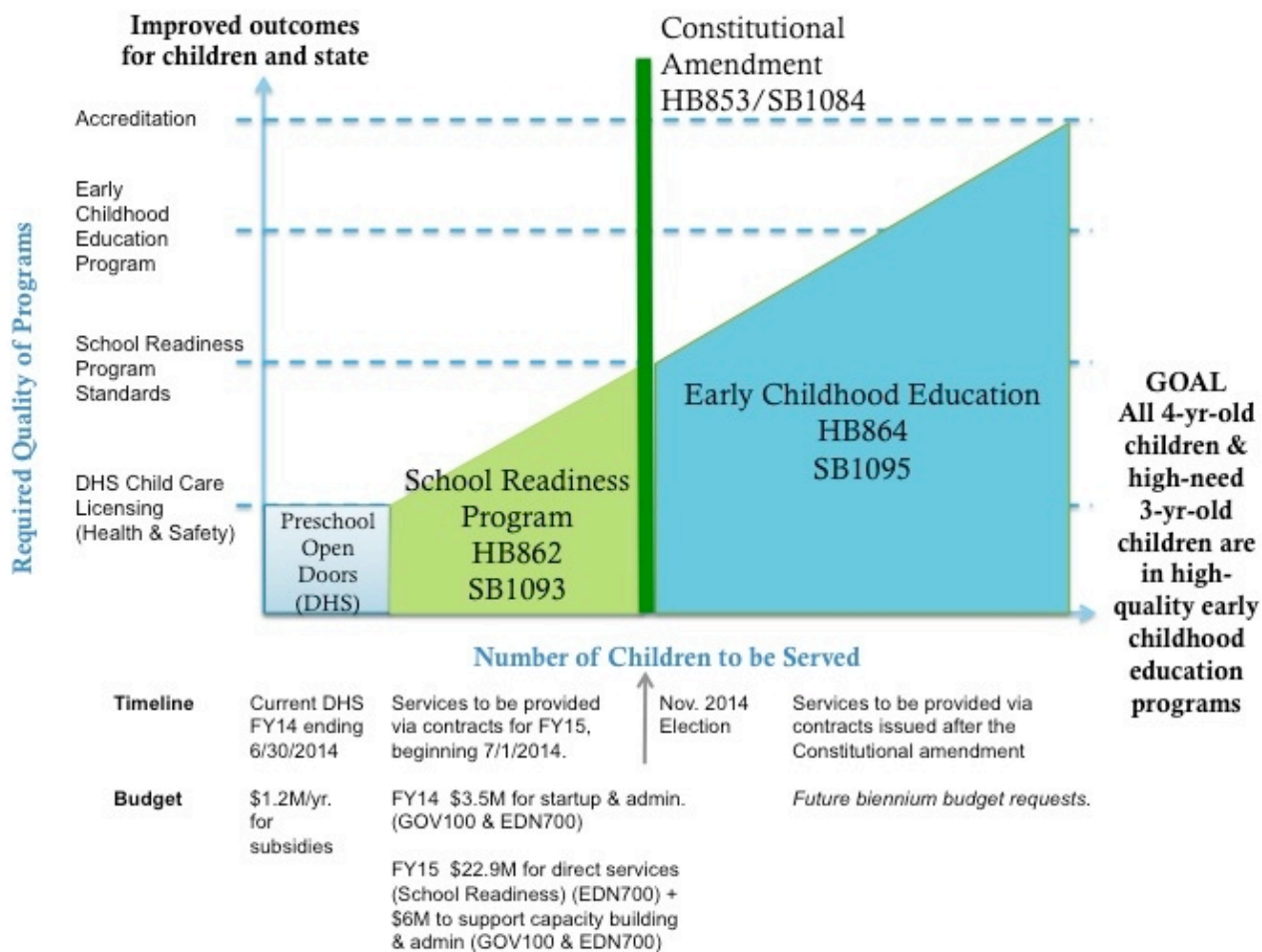
- What can be implemented now, without a ConAm.
- Meets urgent need to serve about 3,500 four-year-olds whose kindergarten entry will be delayed until the 2015-2016 school year due to the 2014 change in kindergarten entry age that was mandated by the Legislature.
- Delivered through contracts with DHS-licensed and license-exempt (the latter added by H.B. 862 H.D.1) child care programs and DOE that meet quality standards established by EOEL.
- Allows more children to be ready to learn on day one of kindergarten by focusing more on socialization skills.
- Establishes the infrastructure for the Early Childhood Education Program.
- Target start date: Fall 2014.

PHASE 2 - The Early Childhood Education Program (HB864 / SB1095):

- The large, full-scale program that can be implemented only with a ConAm.
- Serves more children: three- and four-year-old children, with priority for fours.

- Delivered through contracts with private early childhood education providers and DOE that meet quality standards established by EOEL.
- Will help a child with social-emotional development but also intellectual development. Incorporates higher standards for curriculum, assessment, and teacher quality that can be aligned with 100% of the Hawaii Early Learning and Development Standards. Tied to educational outcomes. Focuses on the “whole” child; still developmentally appropriate.
- Only under this program will we be able to hold participating providers accountable for educational outcomes, which is what is needed to help us achieve the outcomes we want for children.
- Because the focus is on education, the risk of it being challenged under the Constitution is high – there has been litigation in the past.
- Target start date: Fall 2016.

Figure 1: Graphic Display of Implementation



Funding: Short-term vs. Long-term Requirements

The Governor's initiative proposes a graduated implementation.

- The program initially serves late-born four-year-olds, the gap group that will result from the 2014 change in kindergarten entry age.
 - Governor's executive budget for the biennium requests \$22.9M in FY15 for direct services.
 - Estimated number served = 3500.
- The Governor's plan envisions increasing the number of eligible four-year-olds over time as the budget allows.
 - Providing access to every four-year-old statewide would cost an estimated \$125M.
 - Estimated number served = 18,000 kids, assuming close to 100% participation (similar to participation rate in voluntary kindergarten).
- The amount of funding and program expansion depends on the decisions of future legislatures.

Why Can't We Delay Implementation Until After the ConAm is Ratified?

If we don't have a program in place for Fall 2014, there will be no services for the 5,100 children in the gap group created by the 2014 change in kindergarten entry age, which is a result of legislative action in 2012.

Shouldn't We Fix the K-12 System First?

- Many children are entering kindergarten without the skills and behaviors necessary for school.
- Having a quality early childhood education program that aligns with the K-12 system is key to ensuring that more children are going to school prepared and ready to learn. We're feeding into the K-12 pipeline, which will help get better results in K-12. As stated recently by a school principal, the Governor's early learning initiative is a game changer for K-12.
- Local efforts to reform K-12 that involve early learning have already borne fruit. As part of Race to the Top reform efforts, zones of school innovation established in two communities are providing children with access to preschool programs yielding improved results in the elementary school grades.
- The radical transformation of the Union City, N.J., K-12 system, located in a poor community with all the ingredients for failure was largely due to the establishment of a publicly-funded pre-kindergarten program.

Is This Taking Funding Away From K-12?

- No. School Readiness program is a separate request for general funds.
- The Governor's executive budget includes the operating request for school-based funding based on projected enrollment in DOE and charter schools, and includes new funds for DOE initiatives.